

A
S E R M O N
Preached before the
KING,

February 10th 167⁷₈.

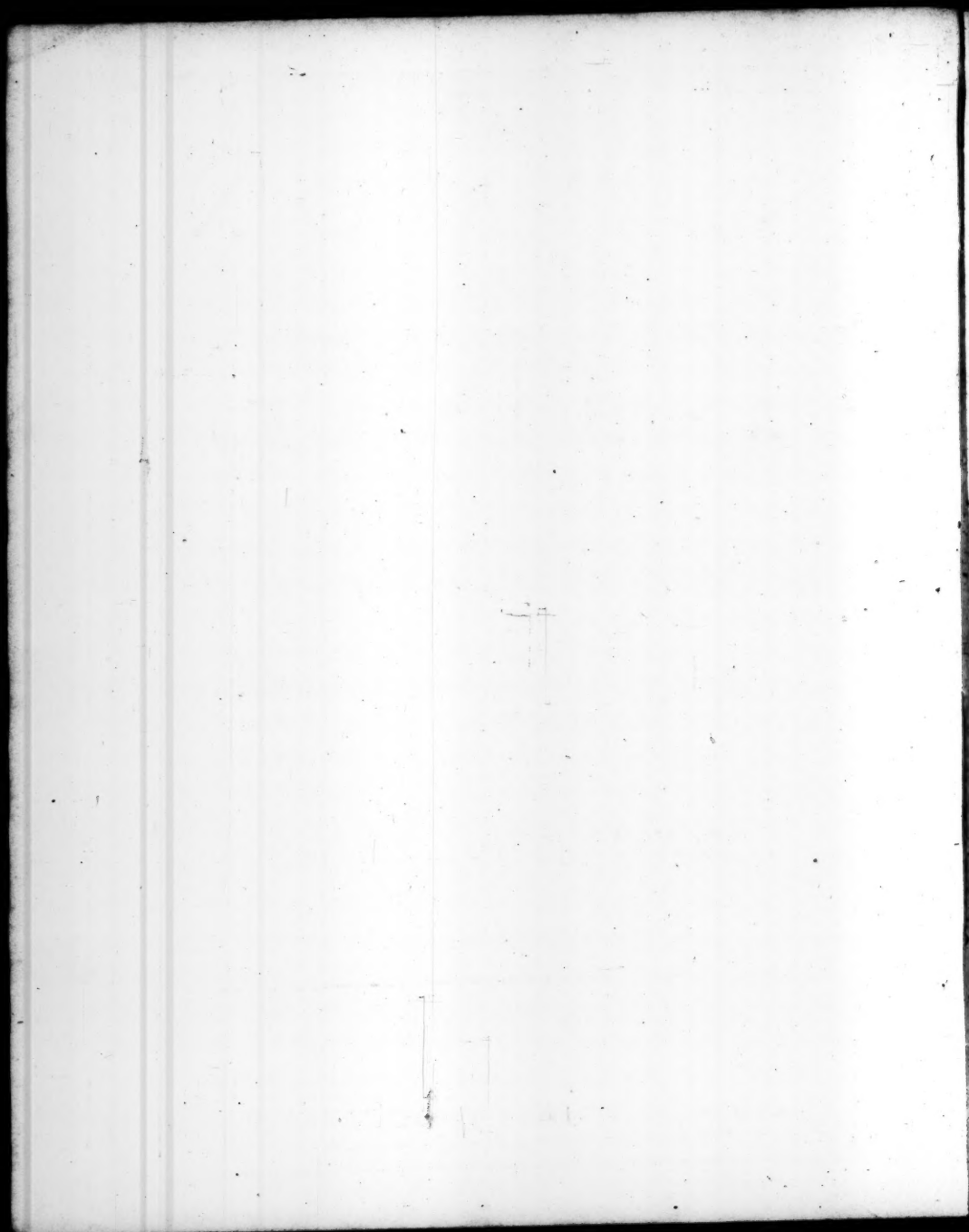
By Z. C R A D O C K, D. D.
Preacher to the Honourable Society of
Grays-Inne, and Chaplain in Ordinary
to His MAJESTY.

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K I N G.

E C C L E S I A S T E S 9. 2.

*There is one Event to the Righteous and to
the Wicked.*

TH E Argument of the *Epicures* against Providence agrees well with their Doctrine concerning the Beginning of the world, and is every whit as foolish and unreasonable.

They tell us, That such an attendance upon the works of nature and the actions of men as Providence implies, is too mean for God's supreme Greatness, and too troublesome for his perfect Happiness; That his Injoyments and

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Satisfactions would be interrupted with his Cares; That he must be wearied with the endless continuance, and distracted with the infinite variety of them; That Men are too inconsiderable, for him to regard what they do; That he is so far from being concerned, from being either pleased or angry with them, that he is not so much as a Spectator of their actions; worshipping or blaspheming him, doing right or wrong one to another, is all alike; nothing can move him to take notice, much less to interpose or meddle to do them either good or harm. This kind of Reasoning was justly despised for the weakness of it, and justly suspected to be rather a crafty insinuation of Atheism, and a pursuance of their design against Religion, then a way of good and conclusive arguing, even in their own opinion.

How could men, that discourse clearly and consistently in many other matters, fall into such a gross mistake, as to conclude concerning the Nature of God, which is infinitely perfect, from the defects and imperfections of a man?

Because *we* cannot attend long, nor to many things at once, but are tired with
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thinking, and perplexed with doubts, wavering and uncertain to resolve, erring in the choice of our end, and, when that is well chosen, easily bewildered and lost in our way: therefore infinite Knowledge and almighty Power must be liable to the same inconveniencies with our Ignorance and Weakness.

Plainly to repeat such an Argument, is enough for the Answer of it.

The more usual Objection against Providence is more difficult, which all that have treated upon that subject, have thought worthy of a very serious consideration.

If God govern the World, how come things to pass so unlikely to be suffered by infallible Wisdom and Justice?

What Rule is it by which he distributes good and evil things?

How must we defend his Goodness, when the Righteous are in adversity, and the Wicked prosper?

Why do not things befall men according to their works; but oftentimes *there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work*

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work of the righteous? Eccles. 8. 14. How come all things alike unto all, one Event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not? as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath.

It's no wonder that these should be hard Questions to them who knew nothing certainly of Rewards and Punishments after Death.

But it would seem strange, that they who were better instructed by Revelation, should be at a stand sometimes, and doubtful what to resolve; if every Day's experience did not teach us how apt even wise men are to hearken to the suggestions of Passion against Reason, and to break out into hasty expressions, contrary to their habitual persuasion.

Job complains, Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them, Job 21. 7, 9.

David saith of himself, I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as other men; neither

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neither are they plagued like other men. Psal. 73. 3, 5.

He was ready to conclude that he had been a good man to no purpose, *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* Vers. 13, 14.

They were tempted to a prophane misbelief, their thoughts were discomposed for a little while, but presently settled again; as appears in the process of their Discourses, in which they recover into the way of reasoning aright concerning these things, and answer their own Objections.

Solomon calls this *an evil under the sun, that there is one Event unto all*: Eccles 9. 3. Not that he either doubts of or blames God's Providence, but the great evil spoken of is the evil of mens foolish construction and false consequence, mentioned in the words following, *yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live.* This seems to be the same effect of the same cause which are plainly described, Eccles 8. 11. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily;*

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therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

But what-ever those men, who would by all means discharge themselves of the Fear of God, may be forward to infer from this uncertainty of Events, either, that there is no Providence, or, that God is unconcerned whether men be just or unjust; it will appear, when the whole matter is laid together, that their inference is rash and ill-grounded; that Reason, as well as Religion, is against them; that this order in the Government of the World is necessary to the Wisdom, and consistent with the Justice of God, and with his Goodness too, and with David's Testimony concerning him, *Psal.*

11. 7. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.

There is indeed very often one event of Health and Sicknes, Riches and Poverty, Peace and War, Victory and Defeat, to the Righteous and to the Wicked, of which, common observation is proof enough, without the Authority of Scripture: but this is no argument against Providence, as it will appear, if these Three things be considered.

I. That for the same things uncertainly and

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and indifferently to befall the Righteous and the Wicked in this life, is unavoidably necessary.

2. That they who from hence object against Providence are no competent Judges in the case, and suppose in their Objection that which is false.
3. That, however, the Day of Judgment is a sufficient Answer to their Objection.

I. For the same things uncertainly and indifferently to befall the Righteous and the Wicked in this life, is unavoidably necessary.

If Prosperity and Affliction were the certain effects of God's Love and Hatred, the constant marks of his Favour and Displeasure, it would be impossible to reconcile what we see every day, with what we are taught to believe. But Prosperity and Affliction have other causes, and there is a necessity of their happening uncertainly, *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, as well from the nature of men, as from their relations and mutual dependencies, and from the order of this life to the next as a state of probation. This necessity will be evident, if we consider,

1. There must be *one event to the Righteous*

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ous and to the Wicked, because men have the dominion over their own actions, and do that which themselves chuse to do.

The Fire and Hail, the Ice and Snow fulfill the will of God, the Plants flourish and wither, and the Seasons change, and the Heavenly bodies move exactly according to the intention and design of their Maker, not by any Sense or Knowledge in them, but by a necessity of Nature: but Man is indued with Knowledge, and must fulfill the Will of God in another way, as directed by a Rule, and perswaded by sufficient Motives; not constrained by Almighty Power, as the mechanical World, but submitting freely to the sovereign Authority of God, who hath shewed him the End of his creation, and expects from him a reasonable service, and hath set before him Good and Evil, Life and Death, that he may chuse either Obedience and its Reward, or Sin and its Punishment.

This is Man's nature, and God's way of governing it. And though sometimes he changes the hearts of men, alters their inclinations, makes them chuse and resolve as it seems expedient to him, by an influence upon their understanding and will, which they
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neither discern, nor can resist: yet the reason of this argument is still the same; because this secret and effectual operation of God doth not take away the natural liberty of Man's will, but only over-rule and determine it in some particular cases: in others he leaves Men to themselves. He commands them to worship Him; and suffers them to worship Idols. He requires them to be obedient to Superiours, and just one to another; and permits them to be guilty of Disobedience, Rebellion, Murther, Adultery, Robbery, False witness, and all the Malice and Fraud and violent perverting of Judgment and Justice that Men are tempted to by Ambition and Covetousness.

Since therefore a great part of mens Calamities happens to them by the Wickedness of their Neighbours, and Wealth and Greatness oftentimes are procured by their own Wickedness and Usurpation, (which though God disapproves and strictly forbids, and declares that he will punish, yet many times he doth not interpose his irresistible Power to hinder,) it evidently follows, that the Sin of the Oppressor may make him rich and prosperous, and the Innocent oppressed man poor and afflicted;

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cted ; and that these things must fall out as uncertainly as we see they do, because they depend upon so uncertain a thing as the Will of man.

2. There must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, because a great deal of Prosperity and Affliction befalls men, not as the reward or the effect of any thing done by themselves, but by descent from their Parents, whose Vertues and Vices have great influence upon the persons and fortunes of their Children by the Providence of God, and by the Laws of men, and by the course of Nature.

First, Prosperity or Affliction happens to the Children from the Obedience or Sin of the Parents by the Providence of God, according to this declared and often repeated Rule, *That he visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him ; and sheweth mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments*, Exod. 20. 5, 6. & 34. 7. Deut. 5. 9, 10. Jer. 32. 18.

Of this there are many examples in the Scripture : and that not only when the Children imitate the Sin of their Parents, as for instance, when they commit Idolatry, and worship the
False

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False gods of their Fathers ; or, when they partake in their Guilt, in keeping that which to their knowledge was got by Fraud and Oppression ; or, when they inherit Estates with a Curse for the Injustice and Extortion with which they were raised, though that Injustice and Extortion be unknown to them, in which case the Estate may be found guilty, and the Owner acquitted : But besides all these cases, we find also the Innocent Children suffering for the Sins of their Forefathers.

Some think it very difficult to make out the Justice of this proceeding.

But the Sovereignty of God signifies little, if it will not serve to defend his Justice, in making Men rich or poor, live long or die soon ; if it be not a satisfactory account for such things, That the Supreme Lord gave and took away.

But this way and method of Providence may be also defended, from the usefulness of it to restrain Men that believe, from the commission of Sin ; especially those gross and crying Sins, for which the Sinner shall not be punish'd in his Person only, but also in the calamities and destruction of his Posterity.

Thus:

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Thus the Wisdom of God provides, that the Antidote shall grow upon the same root from which the Poison springs ; that the Remedy against the most dangerous Temptations shall be found in the same Affection from whence the Temptation arises.

Nothing doth more generally and powerfully and constantly affect men, then the concerns of their Children : For their sakes they will imbitter their whole life with continual Cares, patiently undergo the most slavish Drudgeries, be guilty of the vilest Actions, do any thing, and endure any thing, to leave their Posterity more wealth and an higher place ; and yet, if some of them may be believed, they desire neither riches nor honour for themselves. They talk of the World like Philosophers : A little is enough for all the necessities and all the delights of nature ; A retired life is the most pleasant and the most secure ; To sit always at a feast is but to be always tempted to surfeits, and from numerous attendance there is more trouble and danger then useful service.

Now if the desire to leave their Posterity great makes this fine Talk signifie nothing, and forces them notwithstanding into all the
Troubles

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Troubles and Dangers and Temptations to which covetous and ambitious men are exposed; let them consider this way of Providence, and, if they believe it, it will cure them of that diseased temper of mind, for which their Philosophy, though true, proves an insufficient remedy: They will be convinc'd, That a little left to their Children, with all the Blessings that attend upon Religion and Faithfulness and Justice and Charity, is a better Inheritance than the greatest fortunes with a Curse; That the biggest heap of Treasure is but a poor provision, if, whilst the Father lays up the gains of Oppression, *God lays up his iniquity for his Children,* Job 21. 19.

Secondly, Prosperity or Affliction happens to the Children from the Vertues or Sins of the Parents by the Laws of men. A man sees himself entring into possession of the Honour and Wealth of his Ancestours, and rejoices in the Blessings of his Family which he was born to inherit: But suddenly he finds his condition changed, the descent of the Honour of his House intercepted, and the Estate confiscated, and the Bloud tainted; and all this, not for his own Sin, but for the Sin of his Father. This proceeding of the

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Law

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Law is prudent, because many Men are so desperate, that no consideration of themselves can restrain them from mischief, and yet such Men are afraid to ruine their Posterity, and by that fear are withheld from the greatest mischief. And this proceeding is not only prudent, but just, because the reason of the publick good hath a title in all mens Honours and Estates antecedent and superiour to their private right, and reserved either implicitly or expressly in the Laws of all Nations.

There is another consideration of humane Laws in this argument of Prosperity or Affliction by descent, *viz.* That Laws make not a Man's Vertue his Title to his Estate, but Inheritance or Gift or Purchase, or any just way of acquiring it; nor doth a Man forfeit what he hath by the most common Vices: so that a foolish and riotous Heir of a provident Father justly possesses that wealth and plenty which he abuses, and surfeits upon, and wasts prodigally till it be all gone; and leaves perhaps to a wise and good Son all the calamities of poverty, and more; for mere Poverty is not so great an affliction as Poverty after Riches, and want after Abundance.

Thirdly, There is a descent of Good
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and Evil by the course of Nature. A riotous man may have received from his temperate and healthful Parents such a vigorous and firm Constitution, as will endure great and long and frequent Debauches, before it be quite broken: and this Man's sober and temperate Son, notwithstanding all his care and good government of himself, may be sick for those Debauches, and feel those pains and aches which his Father's excess deserved. For in this sense too *the iniquity of the Fathers is visited upon the Children.*

Now if Parents, being evil themselves, may have good Children, and, being good themselves, may have evil Children, and may have Children like themselves, whether they be good or evil, and yet Prosperity or Affliction shall befall these Children by the actions of their Parents; it must necessarily follow that these things are uncertain, and that there must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*

3. There must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, because they are so mixt together in their persons, and interests, and employments, and places of abode, that they cannot be distinguish'd in the Events

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that befall them. They march and fight in the same Army, and fare alike in danger or safety, abundance or famine, conquest or defeat. They live together in the City, and must breathe in the same wholesome, or infected Air. They sail in the same Ship, and the hazards of the Sea, storms or good weather, fair or cross winds, a safe arrival or shipwrack, are alike for them both. They eat of the delicious or coarse fare, the plentiful or scarce provision, at the same Table.

Good and Bad men are mixt in the World as the Tares and the Wheat in the Parable. If you will have the Wheat grow, the Tares must grow too; if you will pull up the Tares, the roots are intangled, and the Wheat must come up with it: They cannot be parted till the Harvest: Then the Wheat may be gathered into the Barn by it self, and the Tares burnt. So shall the Good and the Bad, who must for a while live together, and take part one with another in such things as happen, be for ever divided at *the Resurrection of the dead.*

Then the believing Husband and the unbelieving Wife, the religious Parents and the ungracious Children, the just Magistrate and seditious. and unruly People, the good and
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charitable man and his envious and malicious Neighbour, who could not be separated in many of the Blessings and Calamities of life, shall now be for ever separated, to be happy or miserable alone by themselves.

But whilst they live here, they must share one in another's fortune, and enjoy the same Prosperity, or suffer the same Affliction together.

4. There must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, for the more evident and certain distinguishing of them one from another.

The Devil's insinuation against *Job's* Integrity would have been unanswerable, if it had been true, *viz.* That his Service of God was for the World's sake; that his Love would be changed into Despight, and his Prayers into Cursing, if he were afflicted. But his behaviour in the greatest Affliction that ever befel a meer Man was an undeniable proof of his Sincerity.

Those in whom the Love of the World is the ruling affection, as the case now stands, trouble not themselves much about Religion or Justice. Vertue sometimes helps a little, but more often hinders them from obtaining
their

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their end ; at least they think so. Yet these Men would be very devout and precise, if by such means they might be rich and great, and enjoy all manner of pleasure, and have satisfaction to all their desires. The Men to whom Gain is better than Godliness would not be Extortioners, if more were to be gotten by Justice : They would not be cruel, and without Compassion to the Poor, if they believed that their Wealth would increase by what they give away : They would not send their Adventures to *Arabia* and *India*, if they could have a better market at home ; if building the Temple, and giving liberally to the Altar, would return their Stock with more Profit. If Religion were now become the only way for the Proud to be advanced, and for the Voluptuaries to be filled with sensual delights, and for the Spiteful to be revenged, what change would there suddenly be in the manners of wicked men ! how reformed would they seem ! very good in outward appearance, and yet as bad as ever ; in a garb indeed of Religion, but deceiving themselves as well as others with a disguise ; *having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power ; being all the while in the gall of bitterness, and*
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in the bonds of iniquity ; lovers of pleasure more then lovers of God ; having their hearts full of all the abominations of Pride, and the idolatry of Covetousness.

Flatterers pretend to be, and sometimes think themselves, sincere and faithful Friends : But when the Man whom they love so passionately is falling, and they get as far off as they can from the ruins of his Greatness, then at last they find out the mystery, if they knew it not before ; that all their fond and officious service was not Respect to him, but themselves ; that they did not love his Person, but his Fortune, his Gifts, and the Benefits they hoped to receive from his Power.

Such a discovery doth this way of Providence make. Since *there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked ;* since Men are poor and despised notwithstanding their Justice and Religion, and, as it sometimes happens, the poorer and the more despised for their sake ; the men who care for nothing but this World's good, will be unjust, and faithless, and unthankful, and perjured, if it will serve their turn better. They *will say unto God, Depart from us ; for we desire not thee*
know-

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knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? Job

21. 14, 15.

That which would have been Hypocrisie, if Religion would have done their business, will be Prophaneness, if it will not. That which would have been the secret Wickedness of the most close and retired thoughts, scarce reflected on by him that thinks it, will now be the open Wickedness of word and deed. The Man will be known to the World, that would have been unknown to himself. He will be thus much nearer to Repentance, that he cannot be deceived in himself, and think he needs it not.

On the other side, if a Man will be Religious and Just, though he be never so great a loser by it; if he will hold fast his Integrity in riches and poverty, in honour and disgrace, in good and evil report, when he is advanced, and when he is persecuted for Righteousness sake; This will be a demonstration that he fears and loves God above all, that the Laws of God are the Rules of his life, that he makes it his Business to be saved, that his Religion and Worship is not for worldly respects,

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spects, and that his good Actions are not perverted and chang'd into Sins by corrupt ends and motives.

The sum of all these particulars is, That many of the Good and Evil things of this life happen to Men by the Justice or Injustice of their Neighbours, who have Free-will ; and though they are forbidden under severe Penalties, yet they are not irresistibly restrained from doing Injury : That men are prosperous or afflicted by the Vertues or Vices of their Parents : That the Good and Bad are so mixt, that they cannot in many cases but fare alike : and, That the distinction betwixt the Good and the Bad is thereby made much more evident and undeniable : And therefore there must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*

But for a farther Answer, All is not true that is implied in this Objection. For,

II. It will appear, that they who make this Objection against Providence are no competent Judges in the case, and suppose in their Objection that which is false.

It's supposed in this Objection, that the Righteous endure so much Grief, and the

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Wicked

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Wicked enjoy so much Pleasure, as cannot consist with God's Love to the Righteous, and Anger at the Wicked, if he take notice and be concerned in that which happens.

The better to judge of this Supposition, let two things be considered. 1. That by the outward estate of Men we know very little of their present Grief or Pleasure. 2. If we did know their present Grief or Pleasure, we cannot infer from thence which is the Good, and which is the Bad condition.

1. By the outward estate of Men we know very little of their present Grief or Pleasure, That's a secret thing, and depends upon hidden causes, most of all upon those prevailing affections that take up and imploy their thoughts. It is visible who hath Lands and great Houses, and who hath none; who is followed by a long Train, and receives the Respects and the Complements, and who may go whither he will without any notice: But which of these two enjoys himself best, and lives most at ease, is still a Question, which they who resolve by what they see are likely to be mistaken in their Resolution, to misplace their Envy and Pity, to envy the Men that are miserable in all their great Pomp and
State,

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State, and to pity them who are happy in their Obscurity; to judge unrighteous judgment, because they judge by outward appearance.

Scripture and Reason and Experience teach us, that Good men have the most true Delight both in Prosperity and Affliction; that *they have great peace who love God's law, and nothing can offend them*, Psal. 119. 165.

In Prosperity there are many things contribute to and improve the Joy of the Good: a quiet Conscience, Trust in God, Moderation, Humility, *Prudence, and Temperance, and Justice, and Fortitude*; which are such things that men can have nothing more profitable in their life, Wisd. 8. 7.

In ordinary Calamities, such as Sicknes, Losses, &c. the Righteous have great Relief and ease from their Repentance and Prayers, their endeavour to make a Benefit of the Cross, their humble Resignation and Submission to God, and their Belief concerning the Wisdom and Goodness of his Providence. But if they be persecuted for Righteousness sake, if the Apostles and Martyrs suffer for the Confession of *Christ*, it may be a great Calamity in the judgment of their Persecutours, but to their own sense it is a state of Joy and

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Triumph. *Christ tells his Disciples, In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace. Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. These things have I spoken, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. S. Paul exhorts them, Rejoyce in the Lrd always. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus. Rejoyce evermore; in every thing give thanks. He gives an account of himself when he was going to his Martyrdom, not like a Man overprest with grief: I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day. 2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8. They were imprisoned, and scourged, and banisht, and killed all the day long; yet full of consolation. They were troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed, but*

not

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not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; sorrowful, yet always rejoycing ; having nothing, and yet possessing all things. They suffered all that malicious men in Power could do ; but *they were strengthened with all might unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.* They were thought to be in great misery, by those who could look no farther than the outward appearance ; but all that while they had the mighty support of Faith and Hope, the strong consolations of Grace and the Holy Spirit, *S. Stephen's Vision, Heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right-hand of God :* into whose Presence, where there is fulness of Joy, they should make so much the more haste, by how much the sharper their Sufferings were.

On the other side, men magnifie the Prosperity of the Rich, let them be never so bad, and *they call the Proud, Happy :* but the account will be another thing, if the Abatements be deducted. Their Pleasures are short, a Blaze, *the crackling of thorns under a pot ;* often interrupted, not by unlucky accidents only, but most of all by their own unruly Passions, which are so many Vipers, always breeding within them, and gnawing through their Bowels.

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els. *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* Isa. 57. 20, 21. What Peace can they have who entertain such Enemies to Peace within themselves, Pride, Scornfulness, Envy, Vain-glory, foolish Hope, Insatiable desire; whose Enjoyments are easily corrupted with Discontent; who despise their own Success in things of the greatest value, if they be disappointed in a trifle; whose Pleasures are often purchased with long and sharp Pains, that tread upon the heels of them? And although Conscience seems to give them but little trouble, to be either reconciled to what they do, or fast asleep, and to observe nothing; yet ever now and then it scares them with Dreams, and terrifies them with Visions, and upon some surprizing accident will be apt to start of a sudden, and awake in a great affright, and will not without much ado be pacified and laid to sleep again.

This is very often the Inside of that gawdy Shew that the Prosperity of the Wicked makes. Their Afflictions are not so apt to deceive the standers by; there it is easie to see how their Sins and unmortified Lusts and evil Conscience

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ence increase their Torment: They have used Religion too ill to expect any relief from thence; they know not how to make God their Refuge; they are it may be too stubborn and desperate to pray at all, or too guilty to pray with any confidence; their Pride and Haughtiness makes them more impatient; they break their teeth with biting the Chain; they struggle with that which is too strong for them; they can neither cast off, nor bear their Burthen; they have no Patience, because they have *no Hope*, and are *without God in the World*.

The sum of this Consideration is, That what-ever the condition of Men be, high or low, rich or poor, *Solomon's* Observation will be found true, that *God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, Wisdom, and Knowledge, and Joy; but to the sinner he giveth Travel.* Eccles 2. 26. And therefore they who conclude of mens present Grief or Pleasure by their outward Estate, are incompetent Judges, and mistake the matter.

But supposing their Judgment concerning Mens present Estate were true, and the Calamities were as grievous, and the Pleasures as entire and perfect, as they seem: yet,

2.From

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2. From the Knowledge of mens present Grief or Pleasure, we cannot infer which is the Good, and which is the Bad condition.

When the effect of mens Fortunes upon their Minds and Manners is seen, how a lasting Contentment is obtained or lost, how the Happiness of another life is secured or neglected; then, and not till then, a certain Judgment may be made. Now, upon enquiry, it will be found, that in these respects both Conditions prove an advantage to the Good by their good use, and a mischief to the Wicked by their abuse of them.

The Righteous in Authority encourage and countenance the good, relieve the oppressed, *break the jaws of the wicked, and pluck the spoil out of their teeth,* Job 29. 17. and by their Justice and Temperance, and Reverence to God and to Holy things, bring Religion and Vertue into more esteem, and do as much as in them lies to convert Sinners. However, they are such a check and restraint upon them, that their wicked disposition cannot so openly and boldly discover it self, as it would if they were let alone, both in doing wrong, and enticing others to the same Sins which they commit.

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When the Righteous abound in Wealth, *they make to themselves friends of the unrighteous Mammon.* They give Alms, feed the hungry, cloath the naked, visit the Fatherless and the Widow in their distress; watch and pray lest Luxury or Pride or Prophaneness or Uncharitableness should turn their temporal Blessings into Plagues and Curses: They *trust not in uncertain Riches*, but in the living God, whose Gifts they receive with thankfulness and fear: They *do good*, and *are rich in good Works* as well as great Possessions, *ready to distribute, willing to communicate*; *Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* 1 Tim. 6. 18, 19.

The Wicked may be in the same Prosperity, but with another Behaviour. The worse they are, the more they will be tempted and insnared. They which were proud and vain before, will be insensibly led away into more Pride and more Vanity; forgetful of him who made the difference; easily abused into monstrous conceits of themselves, and the most unjust comparisons of themselves with others; softned so much with delight, that they will

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be able to endure nothing that is cross to their will and humour ; setting no bounds to their enjoyments ; impatient of having their present Pleasures allayed with consideration of the future, with the Fear of God, or the remembrance of Death ; which notwithstanding comes on apace, somewhat the faster it may be by reason of their Pleasures, and, if they take no better care, will surprize them altogether unprepared for the change of their pleasant life (if it were granted to be so) into Sicknes and Languishing, and the expectation of Death and the Day of Judgment.

The difference is no less in the Afflictions that befall the Righteous and the Wicked together. For the Wicked, if they continue impenitent, will grow worse and worse, envious and malicious and sullen, and farther from seeking to God than in their Prosperity : But the same condition shall be to the Good a Monitour to examine themselves ; to search and try their ways, and be very exact in their Reformation ; to enquire out and amend their smallest Faults, of which in their better estate they took little notice, and contented themselves with being kept back from presum-

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sumptuous Sins ; to renew, and confirm, and strengthen their good Resolutions, which even lawful Delight had made too loose and slack. And whereas in their Sorrows many of the Wicked renounce God, and dishonour him with Pride, and Stubbornness, and Infidelity, and Blasphemy, and Impatience ; these own God's Dominion, and humble themselves under his mighty Hand, and acknowledge his Justice, and honour him before Men with Confession of Sin, and Repentance, and Submissions, and Prayers, and Thanksgiving.

Thus the same Events are to the Righteous a nourishing Food or a wholesome Medicine ; and to the Wicked, a sweet or a bitter Poison.

If then by what is visible of mens condition we cannot judge certainly of their Grief and Pleasure ; and if we could, yet Grief or Pleasure may either of them be a Blessing or a Curse, and which it is in a particular case no Man can tell, if he know not how either of them will be used, and what effect they will have ; if the Objection be of no force, unless it be granted that present Delight is always Good, and Pain is always Evil : it will be plain enough, that something is supposed which is

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very obscure, and doubtful, and hard to be judged of, and always falsely supposed, when this is used as an Argument against Providence, that there is *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*

III. However, the Day of Judgment is a sufficient Answer to the Objection.

The belief and expectation of this was implied in the last Particular, as the great reason of the behaviour of the Righteous in both conditions, and as their great support in Affliction: and the not believing or considering this, or considering it rather with despair than hope, is the reason why the Wicked are so ill-governed, and often so unhappy in their Prosperity, and so comfortless in Affliction. But if Bad men lived in more Delight, and Good men in more trouble and Grief then indeed they do, and God would not interpose his Almighty power to alter the course of things; yet when the Wicked *go away into everlasting Punishment, and the Righteous into Life eternal,* Matth. 25. 46. *Then shall ye return and discern betwixt the Righteous and the Wicked, betwixt him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.* Mal. 3. 18. And though Men are apt to think

think that time stands almost still when they feel sharp Pains, and the extremity of them makes minutes seem longer than days, as days in a transport of Pleasure seem swifter than minutes: yet the no-proportion betwixt Time and Eternity will endure all this false reckoning, and make a clear account and unanswerable apology for Providence notwithstanding. When Men feel the smart of their own, or think of their friends Affliction, or their enemies Prosperity, they are easily deluded with Impatience, or Envy, or Compassion. But if you would judge truly how inconsiderable the things that happen now are in comparison of an Eternal state, look back to the Patriarchs and Prophets, to the Apostles and Martyrs; and above all, to *Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* Heb. 12. 2. What was that moment of life in which they were persecuted, afflicted, tormented, in comparison of all the time since, and for ever to come, in all which they enjoy the most pure and ravishing Delights, wherewith God is now rewarding their Obedience, and Humility.

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lity, and Faith, and Patience? Is the Objection against Providence, for leaving them exposed to so many Calamities, too hard for them to answer? Do they think Heaven, upon the terms they had it, too dear a Purchase? It was expedient and necessary, in pursuance of the wise Counsels and Purposes of God, that they should suffer for a while: But *is God unrighteous? doth he forget their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope? S. Paul, when he felt the smart of his present Afflictions, called them light afflictions, for a moment, not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed.* What must he judge of them now that the Afflictions are past, and remembered only for the help and increase of his Joy; now that he is entred into the possession of that glorious Reward which he then had only in view and prospect?

On the other side, Whither are the great Oppressors and Destroyers of Mankind gone? Where is *Herod*, and *Pontius Pilate*, and the rest of the bloody Persecutors of *Christ* and his Saints? What is become of all their Pride, and their envied Power and Glory? Is God their Debtor still for their Injustice and Blasphemies, and their insolent and prophane Joys?

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Joys? Hath he forgotten what they did? or doth he approve it? Now they know that which either they did not believe, or would not consider before. They abused his Patience, that waited for their Repentance: and now they feel the Punishment of their Sin in the exquisite Torments of the Soul; and, full of fear and terroure, expect greater at the Resurrection of the Body. If it seem strange to you, that God should suffer the Righteous to be at the mercy of the Wicked; Behold the Rich man in Torment looking up to *Abraham*, and begging for a drop of water to cool his tongue, and *Abraham*, without any compassion of his Son, defending the Justice of God's dealing with him and the poor Beggar that lay at his Door.

Behold the Goodness and Severity of God.

His *Goodness*, leading the Righteous into all the ways of discipline and trial; proving their Obedience in the most dangerous Temptations, both from that Pleasure which their nature covets, and that Pain which their nature abhors: that when the World and the Flesh and the Devil have assaulted them with all their weapons, they may get an intire and perfect Victory, and their Integrity may have
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the clearest evidence ; and they may be confirmed in Faith, and made strong and constant and persevering in Vertue ; and, after their good and faithful Service, *enter into their Master's joy.*

His *Severity*, suffering the Wicked sometimes to be pampered with fulness of Delight, and satisfied in all their Desires ; and sometimes to be afflicted with Crosses and Disappointments, and tempted with Miseries and Plagues to the utmost Impatience : that they also may be tried, and that the Wickedness, which would lie concealed for want of occasion, may break out and be brought to light ; that in the variety of conditions, they may be led, if they will themselves, into the commission of all Sins, and may add Iniquity to Iniquity, till the measure be full ; that God may be glorified in *the Day of Visitation*, and *the Revelation of that righteous Judgment*, which (how hard soever they may seem now) will plainly resolve all the Problems and Riddles of Providence.

The sum of what hath been said is, That it is unavoidably necessary for things to fall out to the Good and the Bad indifferently and uncertainly : That no Judgment can be made,
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by that which happens to men, of their Grief or Pleasure, nor which of them is Good or Bad for them: That there will be a Day of Judgment wherein every Man shall receive according to his works: And therefore it is no argument against Providence, that *there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*

But it may be objected from Scripture, How doth this consist with what is there declared, that *Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is,* 1 Tim. 4. 8. according to which, we find in Moses, and the Psalms, and the Writings of Solomon and the Prophets, and in the New Testament, several expressions which seem to import a Promise of Prosperity to the Righteous?

A sufficient Answer to all the places of Scripture that are alledged to that purpose will be given in some one of these three Particulars.

1. Abundance of the Promises usually insisted on are made to particular Persons or Nations, and must not be extended farther, as Promises for the performance of which God's Faithfulness is engaged; though they
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may be applied as Incouragements to Hope, when there seems to be a parity or advantage of Reason in the case. Many things were promised to the Patriarchs, and to the Captains and Judges and Kings of *Israel*, and to the Prophets and Apostles; and they were assured that those things must happen, for which they had the Security of God's Word. But it would be a great extravagance, for any Man else to be assured of the same Events by applying those Promises. If a Souldier assure himself that he shall have Victory, because it was promised to *Joshua*; or, a Sick man, that he shall recover, because a Prophet was sent to *Hezekiah*, to tell him that he should be healed; or if a Passenger in a Ship assure all his Company of an Escape with life, when they are driven by Storm upon the Rocks, because the Angel of God was sent to tell the Apostle *Paul*, *God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.* Acts 27. 24. The things may happen accordingly, as the Predictions of a False Prophet may come to pass by chance; and then they who use the Scripture in this fashion may talk as they please of the skill and power of Faith, and what Wonders it can do with all the Promises that are to be found
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in the Bible. But if the things happen not, then their confident application to themselves, of Promises that were made to others, runs into Scandal and Blasphemy, and represents God as a Deceiver, that Promises, and does not perform. But though the Promises to them are not promises to us, yet the Consideration of them is of great use to engage our Obedience, and incourage our Hope, when we see how liberally God bestowed upon them Temporal blessings: and though we cannot infer from thence, that we shall be blest in the same manner, we may infer the same Love and Care of us, and Acceptance of our faithful service. In this sense, *Whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* Rom. 15. 4.

2. Those Promises which concern all Good men are not Promises of Prosperity, but of God's Protection and Care of them in every condition, and causing *all things to work together for good to them that love God.* Rom. 8. 28. nothing shall happen to them without his notice and allowance. It may be good for them to be afflicted: and therefore the same Love of God sometimes prevents Afflictions

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from befalling them; sometimes delivers them after they have suffered a little; sometimes keeps them for a long time under severe Discipline, but comforts and supports them all the while. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* Psal. 37. 23, 24. God will not forsake him, nor forget his complaint; if troubles abound, *consolations shall abound much more. Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day.* 2 Cor. 4. 16. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of Temptations;* 2 Pet. 2. 9. either by keeping them out of that condition in which they will be tempted; or so assisting them with his Grace, that they shall not fall into that Sin (for example, that Apostasie) to which they are tempted: though they may fall into that Persecution from whence very strong Temptations to Apostasie may arise. *God is faithful, who will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able; but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it,* 1 Cor. 10. 13. This Watching of Providence over the Righteous, and Care for them, and Assisting them in every

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every condition with convenient Grace, is the sum of those Promises which are absolutely made to Godliness in the Scripture, and especially in the New Testament.

3. Many of the places of Scripture most insisted on in this Argument are not Promises, but general Rules, wherein the ordinary method of Providence, and the usual effects of many Vertues and Vices are declared. *Solomon* tells us of that Wisdom which consists especially in the Fear of God, *Length of days are in her right-hand, and in her left-hand riches and honour.* Prov. 3. 16. *By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life.* Prov. 22. 4. There are many such general Rules as these, the reason and truth of which is evident in most cases; and it is as evident that they will not hold always. In the ordinary course of things, the most Strength, and best Courage, and the wisest Conduct shall get the Victory; Diligence in a profitable Calling shall make a man rich; if he be humble, he shall be beloved; if he be faithful, he shall be trusted; He that is prudent and just in his actions shall be esteemed, and have a good reputation. But for all that, accidents which no Man can foresee or prevent,

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vent, may interpose betwixt the most likely means and the end. The chances of War, Thieves, Robbers, unfaithful Servants, treacherous Friends, the constructions of jealousy and ill nature, secret whispering, or open defaming and false accusing, *the Pestilence that walketh in darkness* infecting a Man's good Name, *and the Arrow which wounds it at noon-day*, may hinder all those Vertues of that Reward which is the natural effect and consequence of them. And in such cases, *the race will not be to the swift, nor the battel to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill.* Eccles. 9. 11. These are general Rules, but *Time and Chance* make many Exceptions: from all which it appears consistent with Scripture, as well as Reason, that *there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*

The consideration of what hath been said will dispose us to be slow in judging our neighbours, and careful in governing our selves, as we pass together through all the changes and chances of this mortal life. Events will no better justify our opinion of other mens actions, then Examples will prove the
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the goodness of our own. We must judge by Rules, not by Success; and we must live by Rules, not by Examples.

Despise no Man for his Poverty or ill Success, lest you despise a Man whom God will honour. Bless not *the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth. Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long: For surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off.* Prov. 23. 17, 18. In Afflictions be patient: *In the day of adversity consider.* In Prosperity, *be not high-minded; but fear.* Remember that a low Estate may be your great Benefit and Security, and that Power and Riches may be a Snare to their owner. Learn of *S. Paul, in whatsoever state you are, therewith to be content.* Take in good part, and make the best use of every thing that happens: and be well assured that nothing can happen amiss, if that be your continual care, which was the result of all Solomon's study and experience, *Eccles. 12. 13, 14. Fear God, and keep his Commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

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